obsessions, and other things

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Gale "Buck" Cleven, John Clarence "Bucky" Egan

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Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Angst, Fluff and Angst, Domestic Fluff, a little spicy at times if you read between the lines, they're both a mess but not when it comes to each other, Tooth-Rotting Fluff, Romantic Fluff, Vomiting, Implied/Referenced Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, these men can not cope well without the war, thank god they're in love, implied PTSD

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by signifier

Summary

“They’d have to catch us first,” Gale counters.

“They’d catch you.”

“Ain’t no bikes around for you to cheat with, Bucky.”

Bucky turns to look at him then, a wide grin slowly slinks its way onto his face. He comes close, leans down, and places a long kiss on Gale’s mouth.

When he pulls back he says, “I don’t need a bike,” and then he takes off running.

It takes a moment for Buck’s brain to catch up, still in the moment ten seconds ago, and then he’s tearing out of the alleyway after him.

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The one where the war ends, and the aftermath comes with both its good, and its bad.

Notes

of the three i've written so far, i think i'm the most proud of this one.

please feel free to leave me a prompt if u'd like to see anything specific! u can leave it in a comment or come over to tumblr @sig-nifier and request something there :))

See the end of the work for more notes

On an unsuspecting Sunday, a day no different to any other that they had experienced since the war had started six years before, it ends.

There were still things to do, documents to sign and notices to send out, but that was down to the higher ups, and so the Major's had been instructed to stick close by, just in case they were needed, and that's exactly what they were doing. They'd hired two rooms at a hotel not too far from base, but they really only needed the one.

Gale handles it better than Bucky does, for the most part. Bucky is restless, on edge, like any minute a German soldier is going to come bursting through their door. For the first week of their freedom, Bucky hangs around the hotel room phone waiting for the call that, actually, the ceasefire had all been one big joke, and they'd be needed in the air within the hour. It's a call that never comes, that Gale sometimes prays never will, but it doesn't stop the tapping of Bucky's leg or the glances he throws the machine.

Buck does his best to distract him. For three days they lay in bed, a tangle of limbs and heat. It was such a joy to be able to sleep beside him, sleep with him, with no fear of the two of them being walked in on. They could take their time, laugh, finally, completely enjoy the entirety of each other. On the third day, Gale made Bucky lay still until he had counted every freckle, mole, scar that lined his skin. John had been a squirming mess by the time he was done, and it was worth every second.

They fell asleep as close to each other as they could get. Gale's feet were pressed up against the back of Bucky's calves, drawing the heat from his skin.

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There's a body laying at the end of the runway. No plane, no crew, no Lemmons to complain about the damage. A single, still frame.

Buck doesn't want to know. He doesn't want to see, but his body moves of its own accord and he half walks, half floats towards the figure.

It feels like it takes an age, he's out of breath by the time he gets there and when his hand betrays him, reaches down impossibly far and turns the face to the side, horror drips down the back of his neck like sweat.

There's a very neat hole in Bucky's forehead.

The image flashes and Gale is bolting upright with a shuddering inhale. On autopilot, his hand reaches to his left, and another hand is there to catch it.

"I'm okay," Buck gasps, a habit, before Bucky can say a word.

John brings his free hand round to Gale's hip, leaning up against his side. He doesn't loosen the grip he has on his hand. He says, softly, full of sleep, "I know."

Gale lets go, climbs out of the bed, can't stand the way the sheets are sticking to his skin. He closes his hands into tight fists, opens them, closes them once more. *In for seven, out for eleven, breathe, breathe, breathe.*

He risks a glance at Bucky.

The man is sat with his eyes half closed, watching him in the dark. He doesn't look upset about being pulled from sleep, *must be used to it now*, Gale thinks, annoyed at himself. He looks away, turns his back, rings his hands. John's stare burns down the back of his spine.

"Come back to bed, Buck."

"In a minute, I just need to…" He trails off, looking desperately around the room for anything he can use as an excuse to not go back to sleep.

He hears the mattress shift, the soft padding of feet on carpet, and then John is running his hands from his shoulders down to his wrists.

"It can wait till morning." Bucky's always so indulgent, doesn't call him on his shit when he knows it's not the right moment. The warmth of his hands – he runs so hot – is a steady reminder that blood is still flowing through his body. "The rooms not going anywhere."

Gale makes a small noise, a hum of acknowledgement, and lets himself be lead back to bed. John lays on his back and lets Buck rest his head on his chest, an arm pulling him close. It takes a little while longer until Gale's calmed down enough to shut his eyes, but when he does he drifts asleep to the constant *thump, thump, thump* of Bucky's heart.

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The next morning, Buck wakes before Bucky. The rest of his sleep had been broken, he'd been woken constantly by the very annoying feeling that he was falling, and each time he'd jolted himself awake and had to concentrate on the motion of Bucky breathing beneath him to calm down.

He'd extracted himself from the other man's grip carefully, and was setting about with tidying up their room. It wasn't bad, they weren't animals, but what mess there was gnawed at him like a disease and set his teeth on edge.

Finger marks on an expensive looking glass table, boots thrown carelessly across the room, a cushion had slipped from a chair and was laying sadly on the ground. Dust had started to settle like snow on the fireplace they had never used.

He couldn't stand the mess, couldn't stand the way the room feels like the barracks. He wants it to feel like a home, something that's actually theirs, even if it's just a hotel room.

At some point, Bucky had woken. He tried to coax him back into bed, but Gale won't be so easily persuaded in the light of the day and so Bucky left him to it. That had been about an hour ago.

Now, he's leant over the table, rubbing at the smudge with his sleeve when he hears a small, amused sound. He turns.

John is sat on the edge of their bed, leaning back on his hands with his head cocked to the side. He's watching Gale closely, a fond smile playing on his face.

Buck stops his fussing, stands up fully.

"What?" Buck asks, a smile forming despite himself.

Bucky smiles back. "Nothing. You just make a very pretty housewife."

"Oh, I'm a housewife, huh?"

"A very pretty one."

Gale comes to stand in between John's legs, lets him roam his hands where he pleases.

"We could get you a little apron, a feather duster-"

"I'll feather dust *you* if you're not careful."

“I wish you would.”

Buck shoves the scoundrel back onto the bed by his shoulders and wastes no time in following him down.

-

In the evenings, Gale had taken up walking. He liked to go right as the sun was going down, when the world turned citrus orange and there were no fires to blame. Bucky came with him, sometimes, recounting games of baseball he’d committed to memory, but mostly he walked alone.

Tonight, when he returns to their room, Bucky is laying starfish-like on the bed.

He must hear the sound of the door opening because he sits up quick, grins, throws his arms in the air. “You’re back!”

Buck scoffs out a laugh and frowns. “Yeah.”

He turns to close the door, and just as it clicks shut and he turns back around, the full weight of Major John “Bucky” Egan lands against him. He kisses him fiercely, like he thought he’d never see him again, and Gale enjoys it for all of ten seconds before he registers the taste of whiskey.

He manages to get a hand in between them and pushes Bucky back by the chest. He studies him for a moment.

“You been drinking?” He asks, frowning.

Bucky grins at him, seems to be stalling for time to think about how he wants to answer this question. He sways back, then leans forward against Gale’s outstretched palm.

“Only…” Bucky thinks about it before using his thumb and pointer finger to indicate a small amount.

“Uh huh,” Buck says, unimpressed. He pushes him backwards, gently, and steps around him.

“I was bored,” John says simply from behind him.

“Uh huh,” Buck says again.

“Oh, don’t *do* that.” Bucky’s tone is childish. Gale half suspects he’d

just stamped his foot, but he couldn't be sure. "You've been gone all night."

"You were welcome to join me."

"You don't want me there," Bucky accuses.

Buck whips round and fixes him with a harsh look. He lets it land, watches as Bucky shrinks back and drops his gaze.

"That," he begins, doing his best to keep his voice calm, "is not true, and we *both* know it. Now I am going to bed."

With that, he shreds himself of his clothes, switches off the light, and climbs into bed, leaving Bucky standing in the dark.

He doesn't shut his eyes, doesn't even try to sleep. Who was he trying to kid? He knows he can't sleep alone anymore.

There's movement in the room. Buck can hear soft mutterings and the floorboards as Bucky paces. At one point something hits wood, and Bucky curses. He stills after that.

A few minutes later a body is climbing into the bed beside him.

A warm, sticky hand curls into his stomach. The skin of a chest meets the skin of his back.

"…M'sorry."

"'I know."

He hates Bucky when he's like this, hates that he feels the need, hates that he can't do anything to help him, hates how awful Bucky's going to feel when he comes back up for air.

"Love you."

"Yeah, I know that too."

There's silence.

And then, pitifully, "you're not gonna say it back?"

That breaks all of Gale's resolve. His anger dissolves into the mattress and he rolls over so they're facing each other. He brings a hand to Bucky's cheek, strokes his thumb softly underneath his eye.

“I love you,” he says, and means it, “so much.”

Bucky’s face twists, and he presses himself into Gale’s collarbone and whispers endless apologies into his neck.

-

One night, Gale is woken not by a dream, but by three quick taps in the corner of the room. At first, he thinks he’s imagining it, and just as he’s drifting back off, he hears it again. He sits up, fear striking in between his ribs.

Someone was coming through the wall.

“Bucky,” he whispers, and the other man hums in response, jostled awake when Gale had moved. “Did you hear that?”

All he gets is another hum.

Tap, tap, tap.

Buck swings out of bed, hits the lights. Bucky groans in protest.

Tap, tap, tap.

“Bucky, get *up*.”

John sits up, squinting against the harsh light. “*What?*”

“Listen.” *Tap, tap, tap*. “That!”

When he spins round to finally see the realisation dawn on Bucky’s face, he’s staring at him like he’s insane.

“…Have *you* been drinking?” Bucky asks, half way to amused.

Gale waves a dismissive hand and stares at the wall, concentrating, ready for when a pickaxe breaks the wallpaper.

Bucky is out of bed now, standing beside him and looking from the wall, to Buck, back again.

“Do you…hear it now?” He asks after a moment of silence.

Tap, tap, tap.

“You *don’t* hear that?” Gale asks, desperate.

“Buck,” John says seriously, a worried look on his face, “there’s nothing there.”

“What, so I’m crazy?”

Bucky holds up his hands like he’s trying to calm a spooked horse. “I didn’t say that.”

“You damn implied it,” he spits.

And then there it is again, three quick taps on the wall.

Buck growls and drives his boot at the wallpaper.

“Hey!” Bucky is there in an instant, pulling him away from the area. He forces him to turn away, to look him in the eye. Takes his face tightly in his hands, shakes him a little.

“Listen,” he says fiercely.

They listen. The hotel is silent in it’s sleep, and all Gale can hear is his own harsh breaths. Bucky holds him there for a good, long time, and Gale listens so intensely, he eventually relaxes in his concentration. He hears no more noise. His heart settles.

John’s grip softens. He runs a hand through Buck’s hair.

“How much sleep have you got recently?” He asks gently.

Buck’s so confused, and he realises with an ache in his bones that he’s *exhausted*.

“I don’t know,” he mumbles.

Bucky nods, understanding. “Let’s go back to bed, and if you still hear it tomorrow I’ll knock the wall down myself.”

Gale smiles a little at that.

“I don’t deserve you,” he says as they’re laying in the dark.

“Let’s not say things we don’t mean,” Bucky counters, before he kisses him to sleep.

-

Bucky’s flirting with a pretty blonde – it’s always a blonde – at the

bar. Buck genuinely doesn't care. He's pulled sounds from the brunette that he doubts any girl could compete with. In the dead of night, when Bucky's as asleep as a corpse, he'll roll over and throw an arm out to pull Gale in closer, murmuring sweet nothings into his blonde hair. He knows where they stand with each other, knows Bucky mostly flirts for the hope of what Buck might do the next time they're alone.

John turns, now, and the blinding smile he'd been blessing the girl with softens.

Gale's got nothing to worry about.

It's why he takes his eye off him. He turns to look out the window instead, at the people on the street, living their lives post-war. An attractive couple are walking through the night. With their backs to him, Buck watches as he slips his hand into the back pocket of her trousers. She shoves him, but when she turns her head she's laughing. He throws his arm around her shoulders and presses a kiss to her temple.

Gale thinks he'd quite like to walk with Bucky like that.

A sharp gasp pulls his attention like a flare. He snaps his head round, eyes finding their target immediately.

Bucky has a man by the throat, practically breaking his back with the way he's got him shoved up against the bar.

Gale's out of his chair and inserting himself into the situation in an instant. He forces through the small crowd that had formed, calling Bucky's name as he goes. He makes out someone saying it was *just an accident*, and puts the pieces together pretty quick. An accidental bump, an accidental spill of a drink, an accidental wrong place at the wrong time.

"Bucky," he quickly takes hold of John's wrists, squeezing, "let go."

There's no change - it's like he can't even feel him. The man stutters and shifts, claws at Bucky's hands, at Gales. John's breathing heavily through his nose. The pulse in his jaw jumps.

"Let go, now, John," he tries again, his voice stern.

It takes a second, Bucky blinks, he doesn't move, but his hands open. The man slides out from underneath him, rubbing his neck, wheezing.

Gale keeps his grip on Bucky's wrists. He's still staring at the bar, into the space where the other man had been moments ago. The rise and fall of his chest starts to pick up the pace.

Buck looks past him, to the group that were now crowding Bucky's victim. "I'm very sorry," he says, earnest.

"You guys…soldiers?" The man asks through pained breaths.

Gale thinks that's an odd question, but doesn't doubt it. "Yes sir."

He nods, and that seems to be enough.

Buck gets John out of the bar while he's been given the chance. He leads him by the wrist, keeps his grip as they walk down the street. They get a little ways before Bucky is ripping his arm out of its hold and disappearing into a side alley.

When Gale finds him, he's doubled over, his hands on his knees. He keeps spitting on the ground in-between heaving breaths and small groans. Buck had a decent idea of what Bucky'd been doing before he got there.

He approaches slowly, places a gentle hand on his back.

"It's alright," he soothes.

"Fuck." Bucky spits again, coughs a little.

"It's alright," Buck repeats.

"I don't even know why I did that." The panic in his voice makes Gales lungs hurt.

"You're just…" He truly thinks hard, tries to think of how to explain anything that had been going on with Bucky, everything that had been going on with *him* since the war had ended. The dreams, and the obsessions, the drinking, and the fights. He waves his hands in the air, as if he can sift the words he's looking for into his lap.

John turns his head in Buck's direction, he's breathing easier now, and he raises expectant eyebrows.

"I'm just-" and he mimics the flailing of Gale's hands.

Gale sighs, unable to think of a better explanation. "Yeah."

“Well, so are you.”

Buck shrugs, resigned, nods in acceptance “Yeah.”

“Tell you what,” Bucky says, standing up fully and leaning his head back against the brick wall of the alley, “we are going to look so *cute* in those white jackets they hand out to guys like us.”

Buck laughs at that, just glad John is making a joke.

“They’d have to catch us first,” he counters.

“They’d catch *you*.”

“Ain’t no bikes around for you to cheat with, Bucky.”

Bucky turns to look at him then, a wide grin slowly slinks its way onto his face. He comes close, leans down, and places a long kiss on Gale’s mouth.

When he pulls back he says, “I don’t need a bike,” and then he takes off running.

It takes a moment for Buck’s brain to catch up, still in the moment ten seconds ago, and then he’s tearing out of the alleyway after him.

They sprint, laughing, almost tripping over their own feet in their haste to make it back to the hotel first. Gale catches up with Bucky, comes up beside him and is knocked back by cheating, shoving hands. He tries to catch the back of his jacket but his fingertips just graze the fabric. He’s laughing so hard he can’t run properly, can hear John cackling up ahead of him, the fading sound of his boots hitting the ground hard, and when Gale loses the race he tells himself he let Bucky win.

John’s sitting on the edge of the bed when he gets there, out of breath and smug.

“What took you so long?” He asks, the picture of innocence.

Buck tackles him back onto the mattress.

They scramble to end up on top of one another. It’s a mess of hands and elbows. A knee hits someone’s ribs, and is quickly followed by a giggled *sorry*. Gale tries his best, but he’s still winded from the run and Bucky had more time to recover, so he quickly gets the upper hand. He straddles his waist, pins Buck’s wrists above his head, and trails

slow, *slow* kisses down his jaw. Gale shuts his eyes, lets himself really feel it.

When he can't take anymore, he shifts up with his hips. "*Do* something, Bucky."

John pulls back from his onslaught on Gale's neck. He comes close enough to kiss, and when he speaks their lips brush together tortuously. "Say please."

Want sparks like a flare up Buck's spine.

"Never."

In the end, he does.

End Notes

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